

## **2016-11-12. The Head of the House of Romanoff visits Kalmykia and Moscow, September 19-29, 2016**

The Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, visited Russia from September 19 to September 29, 2016. Her Imperial Highness traveled to the Republic of Kalmykia on the invitation of its President, Aleksei Maratovich Orlov. She also spent several days in Moscow.





**On September 19**, Grand Duchess Maria of Russia arrived in Moscow from Madrid. That evening, she met members of her Chancellery and received a report from the General Director of the Imperial Foundation for Cancer Research, Archpriest Alexander Tkachenko.

On **September 20**, Her Imperial Highness departed from Moscow for the city of Elista, the capital of the Republic of Kalmykia. She was accompanied to Domodedovo Airport in Moscow by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kalmykia to the President of the Russian Federation, Aminula Yakubovich Gamzatov, and by the First Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Andrei Vilenovich Vorobiev, as well as by members of her Chancellery and representatives of several civic organizations in Russia.

Upon her arrival in Elista, the Head of the Russian Imperial House was met by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kalmykia, Igor Alexandrovich Zotov; the Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, Artur Terekovich Dordzhiev; His Eminence Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia and other clergy; the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kalmykia, Boova Vasilievich Badmaev; the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Kalmykia, Khongor Badmaevich Elbikov; and by the Deputy Minister of Culture, Nikolai Dzhambulovich Sandzhiev.

“I have wanted to come to Kalmykia for a long time, because no members of my family since the time of Peter the Great have come here. So I’m very eager to learn more about your republic. I can say that we always knew and remembered that the southern borders of our Empire were staunchly defended by the Kalmyks, and that the Kalmyks were among the bravest defenders of our country during the War of 1812 and the Second World War. The Kalymk people are a kind and faithful people, the constant mainstay of the Russian State,” said the Grand Duchess to those meeting her at the airport.





For more information, see: <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/20/arxiepiskop-yustinian-prinyal-uchastie-v-ceremonii-vstrechi-glavy-rossijskogo-imperatorskogo-doma-v-aeroportu-goroda-elisty/>

After a short rest, Grand Duchess Maria of Russia took a brief tour of the city of Elista, visiting many of its historical sites and attractions.

That evening, the Head of the Russian Imperial House had dinner with the Speaker of the People's Khural (or parliament) of the Republic of Kalmykia, Anatoly Vasilievich Kozachko.



Before dinner, the Grand Duchess awarded Speaker Kozachko the “Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff.” Speaker Kozachko described for Her Imperial Highness the work of the People’s Khural and the measures it is taking to help support the development and preservation of the traditional culture of the Kalmyk people.

On **September 21**, on the Feast Day of the Nativity of the Most Pure Mother of God, the Head of the Russian Imperial House visited the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan. His Eminence Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia and other clergy served a *moleben*, or intercessory prayer service, for the health of Grand Duchess Maria of Russia and her heir, Grand Duke George of Russia. His Eminence delivered the following speech at that time, welcoming the Grand Duchess to the Kalmykia.



***The text of the speech by Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia greeting the Head of the Russian Imperial House Grand Duchess Maria of Russia to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in Elista on September 21, 2016.***

*Your Imperial Highness,*

*It is a very special thing for me to be able to welcome you to Kalmykia, and to offer these words of thanks for all the many things you do, truly displaying for all to see an example of genuine nobility, of good upbringing, which have always been a characteristic of the Imperial House of Romanoff—the servants of their people and their country, fulfilling always the commandment of Christ our Savior, Who said: "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."*

*Truly, the Imperial House of Romanoff, which ascended the throne in very hard times for the country, served with faith and truth the Church, the Russian people, and all the national minorities who had come under the authority of the Russian crown. And, of course, we rejoice in the glorious pages of our history, and we mourn the fact that we—the people—violated our oaths of loyalty to the Imperial House, for Mikhail Romanoff was called to the throne not at a time when Russia was flourishing, when faith and peace reigned in the realm, but at a time when even its very heart was filled with Polish-Lithuanian invaders—at a time when Russia needed and, bowing low before him, beseeched Mikhail Romanoff to ascend the Imperial throne.*

*How can we help but be touched by this, how can we not recall how his mother, the nun Marfa, objected so strongly and did not want him to accept this calling, defending her son, knowing that she was handing her son over as a sacrifice of service to Russia? Entreating in prayer all the saints of Moscow, and especially the Holy Fedorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God, which the delegation from Moscow had brought with them, she did in the end give her son over to the service of both God and country.*

*It is deeply tragic that, having been deceived by slanderous claims, some of those near the Imperial House believed that it would be better for them personally and for all Russia for the Emperor to abdicate this throne. It is tragic because for all Russia this decision produced not only confusion, it produced resentment, sorrow, and tears. And later, many, many sorrows: the untimely deaths of millions of people, the desecration of holy places and relics, and the rise to power of a godless government.*

*But here we are now, beginning little by little to put one stone upon another, to reclaim one soul and then another—the souls of people who think now of the salvation of their souls and of how Russia should be in the future. And so we therefore with enormous gratitude receive and acknowledge your service to the nation. This service calls to mind not only the glorious pages of our nation's history, but also makes us think of the future. It calls us to unity—so that our people, who speak so many different languages and enjoy the freedom now to glorify God in accord with their own traditions, should be equally proud also to be called a citizen of Russia.*

*And you, Your Imperial Highness, you help those who have forgotten, and those who have not had a proper upbringing and education, who did not know the history of Russia or know only the distorted history they had been taught; you are helping the hearts of the people to return to themselves, to reexamine the past and to say: "Do not let us, O Lord, make these same mistakes again! Do not let us depart from you, O Lord, or from the Church, so we do not later cowardly betray them both!"*

*By your service as a kind mother to your multi-ethnic people, you have united them and give to us all a feeling of unity, and for this we bow down low before you! Our gratitude is deep and sincere! We know that, by the Providence of God, other relatives of the House of Romanov are alive—descendants of a glorious dynasty. But many of them have chosen to live only private lives, which is their right.*

*But we, looking on how much you do, how you have taken on yourself the Cross of service to society, we are especially grateful. Not only because in you flows the blood of the Romanoffs and because you have preserved the spirit of service of the Imperial House of Romanoff. You have not chosen to lead a solely private—more peaceful and less troubled, to be sure. You gave yourself over to the service of Russia. What a joy it is for us to see in you such a good example of selfless love.*

*May the Lord grant that other descendants of the House of Romanoff will feel the same sense of service to today's Russia. Because we again and again need to overcome those difficulties that have arisen before our country and our people. Because we want to have respect for ourselves and to have the right to order our affairs at home the way we want them. And if they don't allow us to do that and apply pressure on us, then, of course, we will suffer. But from this we will become more united, and we understand that we in Russia now provide a model of how to strive for true freedom and independence; and other governments, other countries will learn from us.*





On behalf of the Orthodox community in Kalmykia, His Eminence Archbishop Justinian presented the Grand Duchess a newly-issued edition of the New Testament in the Kalmyk

language—a unique hand-made copy of the text, produced by Kalmyk master craftsmen using traditional skills and tools.

The Head of the Russian Imperial House expressed her deep appreciation for this unique gift, and thanked His Eminence, the clergy, and all the faithful of the Elista and Kalmykia Eparchy for their prayers and warm welcome. The Grand Duchess further spoke about the revival of religious faith in Russia and how Russia has become a model for the entire world of the reestablishment of traditions and of spiritual and moral foundations in modern times.

Her Imperial Highness acknowledged Archbishop Justinian's efforts to develop the life of the church in Transnistria, in North America, and Kalmykia, and underscored his role in encouraging public dialogue and in strengthening inter-confessional harmony. In recognition of his services to the Church and the nation, the Grand Duchess awarded His Eminence the Order of St. Vladimir, presenting him personally the medal and patent. And, with Archbishop Justinian's blessing, the Grand Duchess awarded the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff" to the rector of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in Elista, Archpriest Aleksei Grishchenko.

After the singing of the hymn "Many Years" for the Russian Imperial House, the Grand Duchess went on a guided tour of the city, visiting sites important to the history of Orthodoxy in Kalmykia. The Grand Duchess venerated the relics in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan and in the Church of the Elevation of the Cross—a unique monument to the revival of Church life during the years of the Second World War.

Afterward, the Grand Duchess posed for photographs at the western gate of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan with clergy, young students in the parish's Sunday school, and with parishioners.

See: <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/21/arxiepiskop-yustinian-nagrazhden-ordenom-svyatogo-vladimira/>

Then the Head of the Russian Imperial House and Archbishop Justinian visited the Chapel of St. Sergei of Radonezh in Elista, which is noted for the list of names engraved in its walls of those who gave their lives defending Russia in the War of 1812 and the Second World War. Archbishop Justinian served a memorial service, or Litiya, in memory of all Russia's soldiers who gave their lives for their country on the field of battle.





After the conclusion of the Litiya service, Cossacks of the Kalmyk Cossack District of the Grand Cossack Army and students in the Cossack course of study in local city schools in Elista gathered in formation on the square in front of the Cathedral. After a short speech by the Ataman of the Kalmyk Cossack District of the Grand Cossack Army, Captain (yesaul) Erdni Nikolaevich Manzhikov, the Grand Duchess said the following:

“I am so pleased to see so many young people in Cossack uniform. You are reviving the traditions of your ancestors, and this is an important mission. I wish to thank the teachers and parents, who are helping their children along this path. I pray that God will bless you all!”

Archbishop Justinian also rose to greet the young people assembled on the square, congratulating them on the feast day of the Nativity of the Most Pure Mother of God and expressing his hope that their meeting the Head of the Russian Imperial House will encourage them all the more to study the history of Russia and to work hard in their studies so they may serve God and their country.



See: <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/21/velikaya-knyaginya-mariya-vladimirovna-pochtila-pamyat-voinov-kalmykii-i-vstretilas-s-kazakami/>.











Then the Head of the Russian Imperial House and the Archbishop of Elista and Kalmykia visited the construction site of the new Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Cyril and Methodius in Borough 7 of the City of Elista. The Grand Duchess toured the construction site and surveyed the progress to date with the Head of the Eparchial Office for Church Construction, Sergei Sholokhov.



Her Imperial Highness in her statements at the time noted the importance of building a new cathedral in honour of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in the capital of Kalmykia, and expressed her best wishes to all on completing the construction and her hope to return when this magnificent cathedral is completed.

“When we all pull together for a common purpose, anything is possible. I hope that your new Cathedral will soon be completed, which will be a source of joy and pride for all. I also hope that it will become a fitting architectural adornment for the city of Elista and a center for the Faith. The Orthodox Faith—our most important support in this life—must be passed on to our children. People around the world look to Russia as a country where faith has been revived and is flourishing. We are demonstrating to all, proudly and without reservation, that people of the 21st century can openly confess their faith. It is truly very meaningful that this new cathedral will be consecrated in honour of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who preached the faith in the land of Kalmykia. This cathedral, then, serves as a link and connection across time.”



See: <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/21/velikaya-knyaginya-mariya-vladimirovna-prizvala-podderzhat-stroitelstvo-kafedralnogo-sobora-v-eliste/>.

Bidding Archbishop farewell for now, Her Imperial Highness went on alone to the House of Government of the Republic of Kalmykia, where she met with the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, Aleksei Maratovich Orlov.

During the meeting, Grand Duchess Maria of Russia awarded President Orlov the Imperial Order of St. Anna for his services to the nation, and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff."

For his part, President Orlov presented the Grand Duchess a number of commemorative gifts, including a picture by the People's Artist of the Republic of Kalmykia Alexandra Povaeva, entitled "Gunchzhur khatun,"<sup>1</sup> and a copy of the Kalmyk heroic epic "Dzhangar."<sup>2</sup>



Also present at the meeting were: the Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, Artur Terekovich Dordzhiev; the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Khongor Badmaevich Elbikov; the Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander N. Zakatov; the advisor to the Chancellery for Interregional and International Relations, Prince Vadim O. Lopukhin; and the advisor to the Chancellery for relations with Government and Civic Organizations, Kirill Kirillovich Nemirovich-Danchenko.

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<sup>1</sup> Gunchzhur khatun is a national heroine of the Kalmyk people, a model of maternal love. Her son's devotion to her serves as a national symbol of filial respect for mothers.

<sup>2</sup> "Dzhangar" is a famous tale about Kalmyk knights.













See: <http://glava.region08.ru/ru/soobscheniya-dlya-pressy/8525-pr.html>.

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Then the President of the Republic of Kalmykia hosted a luncheon in honour of the Head of the Russian Imperial House.

In the afternoon, the Grand Duchess took the opportunity to remember those Kalmyks who were the victims of political repression in 1943, placing flowers at the monument "Exodus and Return," a sculpture by E. Neizvestnogo. The Grand Duchess also toured an exhibit dedicated to the deportation.

Later, Her Imperial Highness visited the N. N. Palmov National Museum of the Republic of Kalmykia.

After her tour, the Grand Duchess presented the Museum a number of valuable gifts from the Imperial House, including rare books and copies of the Commemorative Imperial Medals for their collection. The Grand Duchess also conveyed to the Museum a number of gifts from her son, H.I.H. The Tsesarevich and Grand Duke George of Russia, including a silver coin minted during the reign of the first tsar of the House of Romanoff, Mikhail Fedorovich.

That evening, the Grand Duchess attended a dinner with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kalmykia, Boova Vasilievich Badmaev.

On **September 22**, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, visited the main spiritual center of the Buddhist community of Kalmykia—the Central Khurul of Kalmykia, the Burkhan Bakshin Altan Sume.

The Grand Duchess and her party were greeted at the main gates of the complex by the Administrator of the Central Khurul, Sanan-Geliung; the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Kalmykia, Khongor Badmaevich Elbikov; Buddhist monks; and members of Kalmyk public. The visitors entered through the Lightsome Corridor, which was lined on either side by Buddhist monks from the main gate to the monument to the White Elder, which is at the foot of the stairs leading to the main entrance to the temple. As they entered, the Grand Duchess and her party

were presented richly decorated khadak (or khatas), traditional ceremonial scarfs.<sup>3</sup>



In the Khurul's Great Hall of Prayer, Her Imperial Highness was greeted by the Supreme Lama of Kalmykia (the Shadzhin-Lama), Telo Tulku Rinpoche, the Honorary Representative of the supreme spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the 14th Dalai Lama, to Russia, Mongolia, and the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In his speech to the Grand Duchess, which he delivered in Tibetan, he emphasized the importance of this meeting. Acting as translator for Her Imperial Highness and the other visitors was the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Kalmykia, Khongor Badmaevich Elbikov.

The Shadzhin-Lama said that he was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet Her Imperial Highness. Describing the Khurul, he emphasized that the Burkhan Bakshin Altan Sume—the largest Buddhist temple in the country and, indeed, the entire European continent—is as well “one of the most beautiful architectural wonders, and was deemed so in a competition to determine the most historically and culturally significant building in Russia. The Khurul in Elista was opened on December 27, 2005, after the visit of the His Holiness the Dalai Lama. That

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<sup>3</sup> A khadak is a silk scarf that is presented to visitors and guests as a sign of respect and honor. It is a national symbol of hospitality among many Eastern peoples.

date marks the beginning of a rebirth of Buddhism in Kalmykia. Today there are 26 monks living here, including those from India and the region. We are engaged in preserving and disseminating the traditional spiritual values of Buddhism, the traditional values of Kalmyk culture and Kalmyk art. Our spiritual leader is the 14th Dalai Lama, and so we support the three principles that he has been teaching the world: the promotion of human values, the development and promotion of local national traditions, and the preservation of the unique culture of Tibet,” Telo Tulku Rinpoche said.

Then the Head of the Russian Imperial House and the Shadzhin Lama spoke with each other both in Russian and in English.



On behalf of all the monks, the Shadzhin Lama expressed gratitude and joy for the Grand Duchess’s visit. In honour of her visit, the monks of the Khurul conducted a prayer service they call “For the Welfare of All Living Beings.”

As a sign of respect and profound gratitude for the presentation of the traditions of the House of Romanoff, to which the monks of Kalmykia have long been devoted, the Shadzhin Lama, Telo Tulku Rinpoche, on behalf of the monks in this community, presented to the Head of the Russian Imperial House a statuette of the Buddha and books by the 14th Dalai Lama published in the Russian language. As the Shadzhin Lama pointed out, the statuette was made by local Kalmyk artisans.



“Over the past 20 years, we have been able to revive in Kalmykia not only the Buddhist faith but also traditional Kalmyk crafts. Today we have artisans who have learned to fashion statuettes of the Buddha in accord with all the Buddhist regulations,” said the Shadzhin Lama, as he presented his gift to the Grand Duchess.

In turn, Her Imperial Highness underscored the historical connections between the House of Romanoff and Buddhist population, including Buddhist lamas, Kalmyk clergy, and traditional healers in the Russian Empire. In addition to the widely-known Buryat healer in the Tibetan tradition, Zhamsaran (Peter Alexandrovich) Badmaev, the Kalmyk holy man and healer, or emchi, Dambo-Dashi Ulianov (1844-1913) was also received at court and often met with the Grand Duchess’s great-grandfather, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich. Dambo-Dashi Ulianov was the author of a work entitled “The Buddha’s Predictions about the House of Romanoff and a Brief Description of My Travels in Tibet in 1904-1905,” published in St. Petersburg in 1913.

Grand Duchess Maria of Russia also noted that the Heads and members of the House of Romanoff in exile frequently met with Buddhist spiritual leaders in various countries around the world. For example, the Grand Duchess’s mother, Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna, met and spoke with the 14th Dalai Lama, and Grand Duchess Maria of Russia herself visited Buddhist monasteries in the Tibetan tradition and toured their holy places during her visit to India.

In recognition of the significant contributions made by the Shadzhin Lama to Kalmykia in strengthening inter-confessional and international peace in Russia, the Head of the Russian Imperial House awarded Telo Tulku Rinpoche the Imperial and Royal Order of St. Stanislav and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff."



After the ceremony, the Shadzhin Lama personally led the Head of the Russian Imperial House on a tour of the Khurul. The unique beauty of this most important Buddhist temple in Kalmykia profoundly impressed the Grand Duchess. In particular, she expressed admiration for the colourful murals on the interior walls of the Khurul, which were made by thangka artists. See <http://khurul.ru/?p=27359>.



Then the Grand Duchess attended a luncheon held in her honour, featuring traditional Kalmyk dishes. See <http://khurul.ru/?p=27262>.

***Photos courtesy of Arina Davaeva:***















The Grand Duchess then bid a very warm farewell to the Shadzhin Lama, to the Rector of the Kurul, Mutul-Geliung, and to the lamas and faithful. She next visited the State University of Kalmykia, where she met its rector, Badma Katinovich Salaev, and with professors, and answered questions posed to her by students See: [https://vk.com/album-13199609\\_236430810](https://vk.com/album-13199609_236430810); [https://vk.com/wall-13199609\\_4305](https://vk.com/wall-13199609_4305).



During her meeting, the Grand Duchess Maria responded to a host of questions posed to her by the students, and she

remarked at how impressed she was by the genuine interest the students were showing in the Russian Imperial House and in history in general: “It is a joy to see so many foreign students here studying at your university. Student exchanges like this are very important, because it allows for the sharing of traditions and cultures among different nations and peoples,” she said. She also said she was deeply impressed by the genuine hospitality, warmth, and harmony that exist among the Kalmyk people.

The Rector of the university, Badma Katinovich Salaev, thanked the Head of the Russian Imperial House on behalf of all gathered at this assembly for the opportunity to get to know her. He also pointed out that her trip to Kalmykia was a significant event in the history of this region and, what is even more important, a clear demonstration of her enormous love for Russia.



The Grand Duchess then presented B. K. Salaev the “Imperial Commemorative Medal of the Anniversary of the Nation’s Victory, 1613-2013.”

After meeting with the students, the Grand Duchess gave a press conference for local media outlets, and took questions from journalists on a range of topics.

That evening, the Rector of the university hosted a formal dinner in honour of the Grand Duchess, during which students

from around the world, who had come to Kalmykia to study at the university, performed native dances and songs.

See:

[http://www.kalmsu.ru/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=5651:2016-09-23-07-53-48&catid=1:news&Itemid=333](http://www.kalmsu.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5651:2016-09-23-07-53-48&catid=1:news&Itemid=333),  
and <http://tegrk.ru/?p=2154>

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**On September 23**, the Head of the Russian Imperial House participated in an expanded meeting of the Inter-Confessional Council of the Republic of Kalmykia on the theme «Family—The Keeper of Traditions.” The meeting took place in the House of the Government and was chaired by the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, A. M. Orlov.



Leading the discussions in the Council were Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia, the Rector of the Central Khurul, Mutul-Geliung, and the Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslim community in Kalmykia, Mufti Sultan-Akhmet Karalaev.

Also present at the meeting were the Minister of Culture and Tourism for the Republic of Kalmykia, Khongor Elbikov; the Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism, Nikolai Sandzhiev; the Deputy Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of Kalmykia, Baldzhir Barykova; the Secretary of the Inter-Confessional Council of Kalmykia and dean of the Eparchy of Elista and Kalmykia, Archpriest Aleksei Grishchenko; the Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander

N. Zakatov; the advisor to the Chancellery for Interregional and International Relations, Prince Vadim O. Lopukhin; the advisor to the Chancellery for Governmental and Civic Organizations, Kirill Kirillovich Nemirovich-Danchenko; members of the Chamber of Commerce of Kalmykia, and representatives of various religious communities in the Republic of Kalmykia.

In his opening remarks to the Inter-Confessional Council, President Orlov called the meeting "historic" because of the presence of the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia. "I am very glad," he said, "to welcome Her Imperial Highness to Kalmykia. The Romanoff family has made an enormous contribution to the foundation of our state, and to the moral and spiritual foundations of our state and our families."

The President emphasized that the family remains one of the most important elements of society, and that over the course of millennia, among all the peoples of the world, it has been in the family that have been deposited not only the natural connections among kin, but also the entire nation's tradition, culture, and faith. "Traditionally in the Russian Empire, in the Soviet Union, in modern Russia, the family has had special importance, and our peoples have preserved it as something holy, and have had a special reverence for the family," President Orlov said. "Today, in these complex times, a time of new challenges, we note with sadness that many societies around the world do not revere the spiritual values of the past and so have lost their former veneration of the family. It is vitally important that our traditions are preserved and, indeed, strengthened, so that they may remain with us for generations to come. A special role in this question is of course played by the Church and by other traditional religious confessions—Islam, Buddhism, and Orthodoxy. It was with the support of our spiritual fathers that the family became the central place where respect for elders and love of country was nurtured."

The President called on all those gathered at this meeting of the Inter-Confessional Council to coordinate the efforts of the various religious and civic organizations in the Republic to emphasize and strengthen family values.

During the meeting, participants followed up on the President's suggestions and discussed ways that state, religious,

and civic organizations can work together to support families and family values.

In his address to the delegates, Archbishop Justinian discussed the Church's position on marriage and the meaning and importance of the family for the spiritual development of the individual, emphasizing that family life must be understood as a kind of religious service.

The Rector of the Central Khurul of Kalmykia, the Burkhan Bakshin Altan Sume, Mutul-Geliung, also spoke, noting that in Buddhism, the parents in a family—the mother and father—are honoured as one of the Precious Gems. The family for Buddhists is a close and spiritual union of people, where respect for each other is not only something we think in our minds, it is something we express in words and deeds. In accordance with Buddhist teachings, children can never pay their parents back for what they've done for them, for all the love and kindness that they have shown them. And if parents do not follow these teachings, then the children should not condemn them for it. They should lovingly help their parents to change their ways.

The Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslim community in Kalmykia, Mufti Sultan-Akhmet Karalaev, spoke next of the need to raise the younger generation with a sense of respect and appreciation for their parents and all they have done for them, making reference to the words of the Prophet Muhammad.

As noted by the Chairman of this meeting of the Inter-Confessional Council of Kalmykia, Archpriest Aleksei Grishchenko, members of similar councils across the country have been discussing the importance of family and traditional values for many years, and in 2008 they supported the idea of the creation of a state holiday—the "Day of Family, Love, and Faithfulness"—which is today celebrated annually on July 8. At the very core of this holiday is the story of love and devotion of the princely saints Peter and Fevronia, who serve as an example of Christian marriage and royal service. Analogous models of pure and

positive family relations exist in all of the world's traditional religions.

All the speakers at the meeting emphasized that the traditional family functions as a kind of school for learning mercy and kindness and as a bulwark against the inculcation of the ideas of extremism and terrorism among young people. It was pointed out that the state of the family in a country directly influences the moral atmosphere of society at large.

The Council assigned special importance to examples of families that had over many generations passed on their moral values, singling out especially the way the Russian Imperial House of Romanoff had managed to preserve its ancient traditions even down to our own day.

The Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, also spoke at the meeting. She underscored the need for continuous and productive dialogue between members of Russia's different religious communities. She also expressed her firm belief that families must raise their children with a sense of respect for all those who follow different religious traditions.

For the Russian Imperial House, which promotes and embodies the ideal of the State-Family, the preservation of family values is one of its most important tasks as a historical institution. The government, spiritual leaders, historical institutions, and society at large—all must do what they can to preserve the institution of the family, to instill a sense that the family is the natural foundation and prototype of all forms of human community, to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood among all peoples of our Great Family: Russia and the nations and peoples that today and in the past have been a part of our common cultural space.

Her Imperial Highness said: "The family is the beginning of everything. I see how in many countries ideas are promoted that are very different from our customary understanding of the role of the family in society. In some of these countries, they consider the family an obsolete and unnecessary institution. This is enormously sad to see. I was born into a very happy family, where love and mutual understanding and respect pervaded everything we did together. My parents were for me a living model of how to live. A child in that kind of atmosphere grows up

with optimism, which remains with him all his life. I am convinced that, with that kind of love—of parents for their children and children for their mothers and fathers—anything can be achieved. The family and its traditions are the greatest support any person can ever have in life, and a guarantor of success.”

Grand Duchess Maria thanked the members of the Inter-Confessional Conference for all their efforts to support spiritual and moral values and to foster harmony and understanding among different religious groups. She concluded by expressing her wholehearted support for the work it does.

Her Imperial Highness awarded the “Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff” to Mufti Sultan-Akhmed Karalaev, and the Imperial and Royal Order of St. Stanislav II Class to the Chairman of the Council of Elders of the Republic of Kalmykia, Valerii Petrovich Bogdanov.

Summarizing the work of the meeting of the Inter-Confessional Council of the Republic of Kalmykia, the following resolution was unanimously approved:



**Resolution of the Inter-Confessional Council of the Republic of Kalmykia: “Family—The Keeper of Traditions”**

*We, the participants of the expanded meeting of the Inter-Confessional Council of the Republic of Kalmykia “Family—The Keeper of Traditions,” unanimously declare our support for the role traditional family values play in building a harmonious and unified society. Throughout human history, it has been the family that has enabled the preservation and conveyance of moral principles across generations. The family is a unique social structure that has become a treasury of moral experience. By its very nature, family relationships, based as they are on love,*

*respect, and care for each other, have become the primary means of conveying spiritual values to the next generation. Thus it is possible to think of the family as a universal formative institution in society.*

*Unanimously recognizing the moral and formative potential of the family, we—the leaders of traditional religious communities in Kalmykia, and representatives of state and civic organizations—affirm the importance of working together to support families. Supporting families is one of our most important objectives and requires the coordinated efforts of all society.*

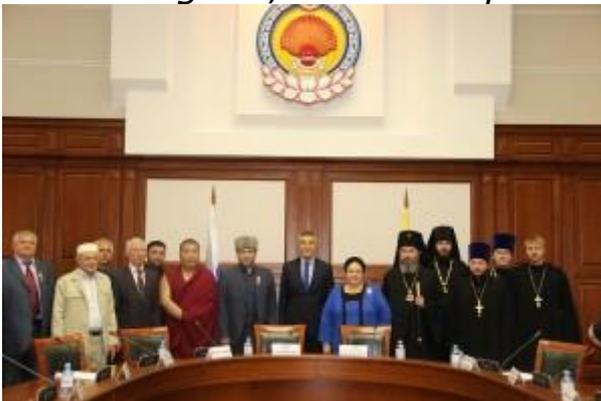
*We should especially note the importance of examples of those families that have over many generations held to the traditions of their ancestors. Having young people know more about the life of these families will help them form a healthy and sensible notion of the family and its role in human society. The visit to Kalmykia of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, represents a call to all the young people of Kalmykia to appreciate the family and traditional family values.*

*In addition, support for families should also find expression in educational and cultural projects at the state and municipal levels, be reflected in art, and be at the fore in cultural and educational activities in the region.*

*It is very encouraging for us to see state organizations in the Republic of Kalmykia, local municipal institutions, civic organizations, and cultural centers working in a coordinated fashion to support these efforts. We welcome their activities and we thank them for their contributions to the preservation of family values.*

*We are convinced that it is morally healthy families, preserving the covenants with our fathers and grandfathers, that are the key to international and inter-confessional peace, are the best defense against extremism and terrorism, the best way to foster love and compassion toward others, and the best model for how to construct and preserve the social fabric of society.*

*We call upon all citizens of Kalmykia and of our common Russian homeland, on people of all ethnic backgrounds and religions, to form a single family, to live and work for the common good, and to help and support each other!*





See the following websites for more information:

[http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/23/v-elite-sostoyalos-zaedanie-mezhreligioznogo-soveta-semya-xranitelnica-tradicij/;](http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/23/v-elite-sostoyalos-zaedanie-mezhreligioznogo-soveta-semya-xranitelnica-tradicij/)

<http://vkalmykii.com/v-elite-sostoyalos-rasshirennoe-zasedanie-mezhreligioznogo-soveta-kalmykii-semya-khranitelnitsa-traditsij;>

[http://glava.region08.ru/ru/soobscheniya-dlya-pressy/8532-pr.html#!prettyPhoto\[gallerya405f6ae02\]/4/;](http://glava.region08.ru/ru/soobscheniya-dlya-pressy/8532-pr.html#!prettyPhoto[gallerya405f6ae02]/4/;)

<https://youtu.be/OTJPeRhkJrE>;

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9\\_19RuAR60](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9_19RuAR60).

The Cossacks of the Kalmyk Cossack District of the Grand Cossack Army of the Don then hosted a luncheon in honour of the Grand Duchess. A number of guests rose to give speeches welcoming Her Imperial Highness, including Ataman Erdni Nikolaevich Manzhikov of the Kalmyk Cossack District; the father of the first President of the Republic of Kalmykia, K. N. Iliumzhikova; and the People's Writer of the Republic of Kalmykia, Nikolai Dorzhinovich Iliumzhinov, who presented copies of his books to Her Imperial Highness; and other Cossack leaders and Atamans. During the luncheon, a number of traditional Cossack and Kalmyk songs and other musical compositions were performed.

That afternoon, the Head of the Russian Imperial House and the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, along with other officials, participated in the opening ceremonies of the Inter-Regional Festival "Family Traditions," where she attended a concert and gave a short speech greeting all the participants of the festival. She also awarded the Order of St. Stanislaw III Class and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff" to the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Kalmykia, Khongor Badmaevich Elbikov, and to the Deputy Minister of Culture, Nikolai Dzhambulovich Sandzhiev.

See: <http://tegrk.ru/?p=2173>

Before the opening ceremonies of the Festival, Her Imperial Highness was introduced to Kundeling Tatsak Dzhedun Rinpoche,

a high-ranking Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, who had arrived in Kalmykia for this event.

That evening, a formal dinner in honour of the Head of House of Romanoff was hosted by His Eminence Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia. Attending the dinner was the Chief Federal Inspector in the Republic of Kalmykia, Alexander Viktorovich Beliaev; members of the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Eparchy of Elista and Kalmykia; and members of the Grand Duchess's Chancellery.

On **September 24**, on the Day of the City of Elista holiday, the Head of the Russian Imperial House went to the monument to nature "Lone Poplar," where Her Imperial Highness met with the head of the Tselinsky District, Sergei Kanurovich Yerenshchenov.





There she also met Kundeling Rinpoche, one of the leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, and with his assistant Tubten-Lama, and with the Administrator of the Central Khurul, Sanan-Geliung.



The Grand Duchess and Kundeling Rinpoche warmly greeted each other and chatted over tea in the Kalmyk-style tent nearby. There the Grand Duchess and those in her party were treated to traditional Kalmyk Jamba tea, to bortsog pancakes, and to other traditional Kalmyk dishes.

In their conversation, Kundeling Rinpoche and the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia spoke about the importance of preserving national cultures, about carrying on traditions, customs, and rituals, and about how the Kalmyk people in particular venerate their traditional ways. Her Imperial Highness

said that she believes her most important task is to strengthen inter-cultural ties between the peoples of the Russian Federation. The Grand Duchess expressed her thanks for the kindness and hospitality shown to her by her Kalmyk countrymen.

The Venerable Kundeling Rinpoche said, in turn, that this was his third visit to Kalmykia, and he feels that he is among family when he is here. The Buddhist leader noted that such holy places as the "Lone Poplar" are very important not only to the Buddhist faithful and to tourists, but also to local youth—the next generation, who regard this monument as a special place.

The Grand Duchess and her party were also greeted by the head of the Municipal Administrative District, Sergei Kanurovich Yerenzhenov, who presented the Grand Duchess a number of commemorative gifts, including a holy statuette commemorating the Grand Duchess's visit to the "Lone Poplar" and the "Pagoda of Seven Days."

During the meeting in the Kalmyk tent, a number of musical pieces were performed on the dombra by the Honoured Artist of the Republic of Kalmykia Arslan Shavgurov, and by the Ataman of the Troitsky Cossack District, Alexander Basanov, on the accordion.

That afternoon, the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia and the Venerable Kundeling Rinpoche together took part in events celebrating the Day of the City of Elista holiday.



Her Imperial Highness was met in the center of the city by its mayor, Vyacheslav Khozykovich Namruev, and by the chief of staff of the municipal government, Okon Valerievich Nokhashkiev.

As the newspaper *Elista Panorama* reported, “The guests were greeted with a traditional Kalmyk dance performed by students at the Kalmyk National Gymnasium, after which the students presented khatas (traditional ceremonial scarves) to the guests as a gesture of hospitality and welcome. Print and television journalists, as well as local residents and tourists, strained to photograph this beautiful ceremony, as well as other performances, including a fashion show of models from the technical lyceum and a lyrical Russian dance performed by girls from Middle School №17. A reading of verses in both Kalmyk and Russian by two pre-schoolers—Shador Adiyaev (of the National Kindergarten №16 “Badm tsetsg”) and Lera Serdiukova (of Kindergarten №30)—especially brought joy and smiles to everyone.”



“I am very pleased to be here with you today, and to offer you my congratulations on this important holiday, the Day of the City of Elista,” the Grand Duchess said. “I’m especially glad to see how your children, the next generation, are learning to preserve the traditions of their people, since, after all, traditions are what support our lives. I wish you all every good thing. I embrace each and every one of you!” Kundeling Rinpoche likewise expressed his hopes and blessing on the people of Kalmykia. “May your multiethnic city continue to thrive in a spirit of peace and harmony,” he said.

Then the Head of the House of Romanoff toured an interesting exhibit entitled "City of Master Craftsmen" (see <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/24/tvorcheskie-raboty-vospitannikov-voskresnoj-shkoly-predstavili-na-vystavke-v-chest-dnya-goroda-elisty/>). The Grand Duchess and her party were struck by the workmanship, use of colour, and originality of the handicrafts on display, produced by children, their teachers and parents. The first (but by no means the only) souvenir of the visit presented to the Grand Duchess were miniature dolls in Kalmyk costumes, which especially garnered the attention and praise of the visitors.

That evening, on the city's Victory Square, Her Imperial Highness congratulated the residents of the city on this important local holiday.













**Photos by Gerel Nurova, Honoured Artist of Kalmykia**  
(<http://khurul.ru/?p=27370>).

The Head of the Russian Imperial House then attended a luncheon in her honour, hosted by the Mayor of Elista, Vyacheslav Namruev.

That afternoon, the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia received in audience a delegation from the city of Volgograd (Tsaritsyn).

The delegation, which included representatives of the Volgograd and Kamyshin Eparchy and other civic leaders, reported to the Grand Duchess on progress in the reconstruction of the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky (see <http://sobor-aleksandra-nevskogo.ru/>), the cornerstone of which was laid by Her Imperial Highness during her visit there in 2003.

The President of the International Foundation of St. Alexander Nevsky, Alexander Bogdanov, presented the Grand Duchess with an ancient (approximately 700 year old) cross and reliquary, which was found during the construction of a memorial cross in the city of Tsarev.

The Grand Duchess thanked her countrymen for this very special and holy gift, but said that she believed that it should remain in Russia. It should be placed with the icon of St.

Alexander Nevsky, which the Grand Duchess will give to the new Cathedral.

The Rector of the Church of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist in Volgograd (Tsaritsyn), Archpriest Oleg Kirichenko, reported to the Grand Duchess on the construction of a Peace Chapel in the cemetery where Soviet and German soldiers who were killed the Battle of Stalingrad are buried. He also reported about the construction of Orthodox and western-style crosses on that site.

Fr. Iurii Garbuz also described for Her Imperial Highness the construction of the Cathedral of St. Luke of Simferopol and Crimea in the nearby city of Volzhsky.



Fr. Ioann Stukalin, Rector of the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in the city of Volzhsky, and Deacon Evgenii Gordeev, both of whom are members of the Presidium of the Russian Inter-Regional Monarchist Educational Movement, reported to Her Imperial Highness on their activities in the Volga region.

The Grand Duchess also received in audience the Ataman of the Cossack Military Society, Nikolai Mozorov; the former head of the Volgograd Regional Office for International Relations, Iurii Frolov; and Igor Valentinovich Tushkanov, PhD (History and Law).

The Grand Duchess Maria of Russia then bid her farewell to all the residents of the Volgograd region.

See: <http://vlg-media.ru/society/glava-rosiiskogo-imperatorskogo-doma-vstretilas-s-volgogradcami-57304.html>, and <http://vpravda.ru/News/Society/36179>

That evening, on Victory Square, Her Imperial Highness and the President of the Republic of Kalmykia, A. M. Orlov, congratulated the residents of the city on the holiday and presented the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff" to the Mayor of Elista, V. Kh. Namruev, and to the chief of staff of the municipal government, O. V. Nokhashkiev.

That evening, the Grand Duchess attended a dinner given in her honour by the President of Kalmykia.

On **September 25**, before her departure for Moscow, the Head of the Russian Imperial House attended services at the Cathedral of the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan in Elista. His Eminence Archbishop Justinian of Elista and Kalmykia officiated at an intercessory prayer service, or moleben, for the Grand Duchess's safe travels.



The Grand Duchess offered her heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Justinian, the clergy, and all the faithful of the Elista and Kalmykia Eparchy for their hospitality and prayers, and

presented a number of dynastic awards to members of the clergy for their efforts to revitalize Church life in the regional centers of the Republic.



After lunch in the Eparchial Offices, Archbishop Justinian, the Minister of Culture and Tourism Khongor Elbikov, his Deputy Minister Nikolai Sandzhiev, and Archpriest Aleksei Grishchenko accompanied the Head of the Russian Imperial House to the airport and to the ramp leading to the plane.

His Eminence thanked the Grand Duchess for her visit to Kalmykia and for participating in the many important events organized by the church and the local government in Elista and other parts of Kalmykia. He expressed the hope that that there

will be many more opportunities in the future to work together with the Russian Imperial House.



See: <http://blagovest-elista.ru/2016/09/25/vizit-velikoj-knyagini-marii-vladimirovny-v-kalmykiyu-zavershilsya-molebno-m-v-kazanskom-sobore-elisty/>

At Domodedovo Airport in Moscow, the Grand Duchess was met by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kalmykia to the President of Russia, Aminula Yakubovich Gamzatov, as well as representatives of various civic groups and organizations.

That evening, at the Pilgrimage Center of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Grand Duchess had dinner with the Ambassador of the Republic of Malta to Russia, Dr. Carmelo Brincat, and the philanthropist Joseph Gauci. Before dinner, the Grand Duchess awarded Ambassador Brincat and Mr. Gauci the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff." During dinner, the conversation turned to ways to help advance various philanthropic and cultural projects, and to plans to mark the 140th anniversary of the birth of the Grand Duchess's grandmother, Empress-in-Exile Victoria Feodorovna, who was born on November 13/26, 1876, on Malta.

On the morning of **September 26**, Her Imperial Highness heard a report from the Master of Heraldry, Stanislav Vladimirovich Dumin, and received in audience a delegation from Nizhnii Novgorod headed by Archimandrite Tikhon (Zatiokin) of the Ascension Monastery of the Caves. She also received a delegation of members of the Imperial Military Order of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker headed by the Secretary of the Knights' Council of the Order, Colonel-General Oleg Vyacheslavich Kuznetsov, a knight of the Order in the First Class, and also the Head of the Office for the Commemoration of Those Who have Given Their Lives for the Nation, Major-General Vladimir Vasilievich Popov. She also met the artist and sculptor Vladimir Ivanov.

The Grand Duchess at that time awarded several Imperial Orders and Imperial Medals to those who had been nominated for them.

Archimandrite Tikhon presented Her Imperial Highness an icon of St. Makarii of Zheltovosk and Unzhensk, containing a fragment of his holy relics, and a painting depicting the pilgrimage of Tsar Mikhail I Feodorovich to the monastery St. Makarii had founded. The Grand Duchess was enormously touched by this generous gift of the icon, but asked that it remain in Russia so it could be venerated by the faithful.

Major-General V.V. Popov presented the Grand Duchess a commemorative medal "Patriot of Russia" of the Russian State Military Historical and Cultural Center, with accompanying documentation affirming the award.

The artist and sculptor Vladimir Ivanov showed the Grand Duchess a model of a new sculpture depicting the family of the Holy Royal Passion-Bearers: The Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II, Tsaritsa-Martyr Alexandra Feodorovna, the Tsarevich Aleksei, and the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia. The Grand Duchess was delighted by the model and even offered a suggestion or two on its composition. The Head of the House of Romanoff expressed her readiness to support the idea of erecting the monument in one of the cities in Crimea.

Then the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia went to the Emperor Nicholas II Moscow State University of Railway Engineering, where she participated in ceremonies marking the 120th anniversary of the founding of this institution, including the unveiling of a monument to the founder of the university, the Holy Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II.



Also attending the unveiling ceremony was State-Secretary and Deputy Minister of Transportation, Sergei Alekseevich Aristov.

After the unveiling, the Grand Duchess awarded the Imperial Order of St. Anna and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff" to Boris Alekseevich Levin, the university's Rector. The Rector in turn presented several gifts to Her Imperial Highness to commemorate her visit to the university on this important occasion.

Grand Duchess Maria of Russia toured the university, including the multimedia center, where she had the opportunity to meet with students and answer their questions. She also visited the university's museum, to which she donated shoulder boards (epaulets) of an engineer of the Emperor Alexander I Institute of Railway Engineers (the former name of the University), as well as books on the history of the Romanoff dynasty. Of particular interest to Her Imperial Highness was the museum's exhibit on Metropolitan Pitirim (Nechaev) of Volokolamsk and Iurievsk (who was a student at the university and in 2001 founded a Chair of Theology). The Metropolitan was for many years a friend and supporter of the Imperial Family.

The Grand Duchess then visited the university chapel and venerated the Icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker and Empress Alexandra, which was commissioned in 1894 for the wedding of Emperor Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The icon had belonged to the philanthropist and poet E. M. Riapov, a graduate of the university.

The Grand Duchess later attended a concert and formal dinner. During these events, she had the opportunity to talk with the Minister of Transportation of the Russian Federation, Maksim

Iurievich Sokolov; the Special Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation, Igor Evgenievich Levitin; the Director of the Moscow Metro System, Dmitrii Vladimirovich Pegov; the President of the Moscow State University of Geodesy and Cartography and Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Science, Viktor Petrovich Savinykh; and with other officials, academics, and current and former officials in the transport industry.

Later that evening, Her Imperial Highness received in audience the Chief Consultant to the Logistics Office of the Committee of State Civil Service of the Novgorod Region, Alexander Ankhelievich de Ferrero, who conveyed to the Head of the House of Romanoff the greetings from the Governor of the Novgorod Region, Vladimir Pavlovich Varfolomeev; and the Director of the A. S. Arenskii Novgorod Regional Philharmonic, Alexander Alekseevich Vakhrushev. Mr. Ferrero also described for the Grand Duchess a number of on-going and future projects in the Novgorod Region that seek to help preserve the local cultural and historical legacy.

On **September 27**, the feast day of the Elevation of the Honourable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord, the Head of the Russian Imperial House attended the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in Kolomenskoe, served by its rector, His Grace Bishop Gurii, along with the Dean of the Danilov Deanery and rector of the Patriarchal Mission Church of the Life-Creating Trinity in Orekhovo-Borisovo, Archpriest Oleg Vorobieva, along with other clergy. During the service, the Grand Duchess venerated the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God "The Sovereign" (Derzhavnaia).

After the Liturgy and moleben, Bishop Gurii presented the Grand Duchess a copy of the Icon of the Mother of God "The Sovereign," and the Grand Duchess, for her part, thanked His Grace, the clergy and all those present for joining her at this service and for this very special gift. Grand Duchess Maria awarded Bishop Gurii the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff." Imperial awards

were presented to others present as well, including the Order of St. Anna to Anatoly Evgenievich Karpov, the 12-time world chess champion and President of the International Association of Peace Foundations. The Grand Duchess also awarded the Order of St. Anastasia the Alleviatrix of Captives to the former Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation (2009-2012) and the current head of the International Independent Institute for Agrarian Policy, Elena Borisovna Skrynnik.

The Grand Duchess next visited the Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoe, where the clergy and parishioners sang the hymn "Many Years" for the Grand Duchess and her son.

Then the Grand Duchess Maria and Bishop Gurii, Archpriest Oleg Vorobiev, and others toured the exposition at the restored palace of her ancestor, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, including attending a musical performance by the Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation Vladimir Konstantinovich Kudashev and Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation Evgenia Valerievna Smolyaninova. (The concert was arranged by the Department of Culture of the Russian Nobility Association and was led by the Director of the Department, Alexander Nikolaevich Sheffer.)

During the luncheon arranged by Bishop Gurii in honour of the Grand Duchess, everyone reminisced about the many previous connections between His Grace and the members of the Russian Imperial House, including a meeting with His Grace in Paris; his meeting with the Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna, now reposed in the Lord; the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia's meeting with him in Magadan during her visit there during His Grace's tenure as bishop of Magadan and Sinegorsk; and so on. Archpriest Aleksei Moiseev presented Her Imperial Highness and members of her Chancellery his book *The Church of Our Lady of Kazan in Kolomenskoe. Past and Present*.

After a short rest, the Head of the Russian Imperial House went to the Central House of Writers for the presentation of the "Heritage" Prize, which was founded by the Russian Union of Writers and which is under the patronage of the Grand Duchess.



The "Heritage" Prize was established in 2012 to mark the 400th anniversary of the House of Romanoff. The Prize celebrates the revival of interest among the broader public in the fascinating and dramatic history of Russia. See <http://www.premianasledie.ru/>.



The Master of Ceremonies Vladislav Fliarkovsky, the winners of the “Heritage” Prize, Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, in the Central House of Writers at the Awards Ceremony on September 27, 2016.

The President of the Russian Union of Writers and Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the “Heritage” Prize, Dmitrii Vladimirovich Kravchuk, gave a press conference before the beginning of the ceremony. Also participating in the press conference were:

- The Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia;
- The Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House and Member of the Jury for the “Heritage” Prize, Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov;
- The Head of the Office for Inter-Regional and International Relations of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House and Member of the Jury for the “Heritage” Prize, Prince Vadim Olegovich Lopukhin;
- The Head of the Office for Relations with the Russian Orthodox Church and Member of the Jury for the “Heritage” Prize, Alexander Iurievich Korolev-Pereleshin.

Members of the press and nominees had the opportunity to ask about the competition and the ways that the Russian Union of Writers and the Russian Imperial House are collaborating to advance many aspects of modern Russian literary culture.



Members of the “Heritage” Prize Jury: Prince Vadim Olegovich Lopukhin; Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the “Heritage” Prize, Dmitrii Kravchuk; Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia; the Director of the Chancellery of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov; and Alexander Iurievich Korolev-Pereleshin. At a press conference in the Central House of Writers, September 27, 2016

After the press conference, nominees for the Prize assembled in the Great Hall, which was filled from wall to wall. The master of ceremonies at the ceremony was Vladislav Pierovich Fliarkovsky, a commentator for the television channel “Russia-Culture.”

A concert was held for the nominees of the Prize, including a performance from the actress Ksenia Levina, of the Moscow Theatre, and by the soloist Dmitrii Shved of the “Moskontsert” folk ensemble. The audience also was treated to a one-man-show by the famous actor of stage and screen and the official voice of the television channel “Culture,” Igor Ilyin. He read a

number of famous verses from various classical Russian authors—from Pushkin to Blok.

The awards portion of the ceremony was opened by the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Dmitrii Kravchuk, who unveiled to the audience a two-volume collection of works by the finalists for the “Heritage” Prize, published by the publishing house of the Russian Union of Writers—one volume in the category of “Verses” and the other “Prose.”



The Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the “Heritage” Prize, Dmitrii Kravchuk, presenting the two-volume collection edition of the work of the finalists for the award. Also shown: Iurii Vladimirovich Myshonkov, Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov, Prince Vadim Olegovich Lopukhin, and Kirill Kirillovich Nemirovich-Danchenko

The panel seated on stage included: H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia; members of the Jury, Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov, Prince Vadim Olegovich Lopukhin, and the Advisor to the Chancellery for Cultural and Education Affairs and Organizaitons, Iurii Vladimirovichi Myshonkov. Also seated with the panel was the Advisor to the

Chancellery for Relations with Government and Civic Organizations, Kirill Kirillovich Nemirovich-Danchenko.

The Head of the Russian Imperial House warmly greeted all the participants in the competition:

"I am very pleased that we are again this year gathered together in this Hall, and I congratulate and thank all the finalists for their wonderful works, which they have entered into this competition. It is wonderful to see that the 'Heritage' Prize has attracted such talent and interest. I have traveled widely in Russia and I have met people who have entered this competition in the past. I have visited libraries that have the published works of those who participated in this competition in their collections. I hope that, with each passing year, we will continue to meet, here at the competition and elsewhere across Russia, all the many new poets and writers, who will bring us just pride, as you do today."

Then the Head of the Office of Public Relations of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications, Anfisa Valerievna Khramova, came up on stage and gave the following short speech:

"I want to thank first and foremost the Organizing Committee for the Prize and the members of the selection Jury, because of all the work they have done to make today happen. The competition for the 'Heritage' Prize included approximately 1000 works, and each of them had to be considered very carefully. The literary achievements that will be recognized today are genuine the sparks that can light a fire in the hearts of readers."

Then a short statement was read from the President of the Russian Book Union and Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, Sergei Vadimovich Stepashin.



The President of the Book Guild and Head of the company “Biblio-Globus,” Boris Semenovitch Yesenkin

Then Boris Semenovitch Yesenkin, the President of the Book Guild and Head of the company “Biblio-Globus,” spoke, saying, in part:

“You are all involved in a great cause: the creation of literary works. The classical poets have laid down a strong cultural tradition, which can help modern-day authors grow and succeed.”

Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov then noted:

“Once again we are gathered together in this wonderful hall to present the literary ‘Heritage’ Prize to this year’s winners, and I can confidently say that this event has now become an established tradition. It is important to remember that the ‘Heritage’ Prize competition aims not only to preserve historical information, but to help restore a connection with the past in the areas of culture, history, and literature.”

Prince Vadim Olegovich Lopukhin congratulated all the participants in the competition and particularly noted its value in educating young people:

“One of the most important components of this award is its role in enriching and improving the literary environment. The

Prize plays a particularly important role in education, especially for young aspiring poets. They understand that they are participating in a competition that has historical significance, and that enjoys the patronage of the Grand Duchess. This itself provides new potential for the work they do.”

The awards ceremony began with an announcement of the names of the finalists. (See <http://www.premianasledie.ru/2016/final.html>.) This year, there were 75 finalists. Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia personally presented certificates to the finalists, congratulating each for their artistic successes.



Her Imperial Highness Maria of Russia (in the center) and the finalists of the “Heritage” Prize for 2016.

Certificates of Appreciation were also distributed to the members of the Expert Council of the Heritage Prize: Svetlana Anatolievna Rudenko and Lidiya Andreevna Sycheva, who devoted much time and effort to evaluating the works in the competition.

As last year, the Jury was very impressed by the works of several authors whose works were given honourable mention. These included:

- Ivan Malov, for his “skillful stylization that brings out the author’s intent: via Pushkin and Pushkin’s style, to approach a resolution to the mystery of creation” (according to Anastasia Gacheva);
- Vladimir Petrovich Kovalev, for his “sense of historical memory” (according to Lidiya Sycheva);
- Mikhail Svishchev, for his “individual rhythmic patterns, uniting form and substance” (according to Anastasia Gacheva);
- Archdeacon Oleg Shtelman, for the “special energy of the preacher, a person who initiates beginnings” (according to Svetlana Rudenkok);
- Alexander Vedrov, for his essay on the Russian language, for the “author’s variations in the themes raised by Lomonosov, Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and the classics of the 20th century. The author produces an original twist on these texts, moving from semantics to the very structure of the language” (according to Anastasia Gacheva);
- Viktor Balena, for his story “Lidochka,” an “example of a striking modern psychological narrative, where eternal questions of life are raised in light of contemporary realities” (according to Svetlana Rudenko);
- Vladimir Bakhmutov, for his “original workings of the motive of man against the elements, and also for his rich, vividly detailed language” (according to Anastasia Gacheva).

For synopses of these works, see here:  
<http://www.premianasledie.ru/2016/diplomanty.html>.



Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia (in the center) and the winners of the “Heritage” Prize for 2016

The winners of the 2016 “Heritage” Prize in Poetry are:

**Gennadii Tolin**

**Igor Gurevich**

**Iurii Vorotnin**

The winners of the 2016 “Heritage” Prize in Prose are:

**Olga Chernienko**

**Archdeacon Sergii Shalberov**

The winners of the “Heritage” Prize were presented with small sculptures patterned after the symbol of the Prize—a quill in a pedestal made of Afghan lapis stone, as well as frameable diplomas. All winners also were afforded the opportunity to have their works published by the Organizing Committee. They were also awarded the “Imperial Commemorative Medal of the Victory

of the Nation's Victory." The Grand Duchess awarded Dmitrii Vladimirovich Kravchuk the "Imperial Medal Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff." The ceremony concluded with the reading of excerpts of some of the works of the winners by the actor Igor Ilyin.



Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia meeting nominees of the "Heritage" Prize for 2016

After the ceremonies, everyone gathered in the foyer of the Grand Hall of the Central House of Writers, where they were able to meet the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia. Many wanted to speak with her and get her autograph, and despite her very tight schedule, she made time to chat with everyone who approached her. The Head of the Russian Imperial House accepted with deep thanks the many gifts presented her, including copies of the literary works of many of the nominees and winners.

Bidding farewell to the nominees, finalists, and winners, the members of the Prize Jury expressed their hope that next year the award ceremony will again include nominees and finalists from every corner of Russia. Next year will be the fifth year the "Heritage" Prize is awarded, and already works are beginning to be submitted for consideration. See <http://www.premianasledie.ru/2016/>.

That evening, the Russian Union of Writers hosted a formal dinner in honour of the Head of the Russian Imperial House in the restaurant of the Central House of Writers.

On **September 28**, the Head of the Russian Imperial House visited the Patriarchal Mission the Office of the Belorussian Exarchate in Moscow—the Church of the Holy Great Martyr Irene in Pokrovskoe, founded by the first tsar of the House of Romanoff, Mikhail Feodorovich, in honour of the patron saint of his first-born child, Tsarevna Irina Mikhailovna.

The Rector of the Church, His Eminence Archbishop Dmitrii of Vitebsk and Orshansk, with other clergy, served a moleben for the health of the Grand Duchess Maria and her son and heir, the Grand Duke George. Attending the service were the Ambassador at Large of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Russian Military Historical Society, Vladimir Evgenievich Churov; the Chairman of the Knights' Council of the Imperial Military Order of St. Nicholas the Wonder Worker, Major General, Active State Counsellor II Class, and Assistant to the Deputy Minister of Defense, Alexander Valentinovich Kirilin; the leadership and several members of the Russian Nobility Association, of the organization "For Faith and Fatherland," and of other civil groups; and many parishioners.

After the service, His Eminence delivered a formal greeting to the Grand Duchess and all those present. The Grand Duchess responded by thanking His Eminence, all the clergy, and all the parishioners of the Church of the Great Martyr Irina, for joining her in prayer at this service and for their warm welcome. She then presented to Archbishop Dmitrii the icon of the Venerable

St. Makarii of Zheltovosk and Unzhensk, containing a fragment of his holy relics, which she had received as a gift on September 13/26 from a delegation from Nizhnii Novgorod, to be placed in this holy church so that the people of this parish and city could venerate it from now on, and for as long as this holy house stands. St. Makarii is one of the most important Heavenly patrons of the House of Romanoff. This saint, who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries, was especially venerated by Patriarch Filaret (Romanoff) and by the first tsar of the Romanoff dynasty, Mikhail Feodorovich. According to holy tradition, through the prayers of this saint, the life of the tsar was saved in 1613. Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich then prayed to St. Makarii for the release of his father from Polish captivity.

The Head of the Russian Imperial House then awarded Archbishop Dmitrii the Imperial Order of St. Anna for his services to the Holy Church, and to the nations of Belarus and Russia.

The Grand Duchess also presented other Imperial awards to several others in attendance, including the Imperial Order of St. Anastasia the Alleviatrix of Captives and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff" to the former First Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, and current community activist, Liubov Konstantinovna Sliska (with whom the Grand Duchess has been acquainted since 2003, when they met at the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Seraphim of Sarov). She also presented the Imperial Order of St Anna III Class to the famous Georgian artist, director, and community activist David Buduevich Georgobiani (who played the lead role of the artist Sandro Barateli in the film by Tengiz Abuladze, *Repentance*); and other Orders and Imperial Medals to various Rusyn communities leaders and Church benefactors.

The Head of the House of Romanoff then toured the church's side chapels to the Holy Trinity (in the central part of the church), St. Irina (on the north side of the church), both of which are under restoration, and the chapel of St. Catherine (on the south

side of the church), renovations of which were completed some time ago. A Litiya commemoration service for the Grand Duke Wladimir Kirillovich and Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna was then held in the lower church, which is dedicated to the Holy-Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir. Upon the recommendation of Archbishop Dmitrii, after the service Her Imperial Highness paid tribute to Vladimir Alexandrovich Kalashnikov, one of the benefactors of the lower Chapel of St. Vladimir, awarding him the "Imperial Commemorative Medal for the Anniversary of the Nation's Victory."

Grand Duchess Maria then gave an interview to several reporters and spent time talking to parishioners.

Afterward, the Grand Duchess had tea with His Eminence Archbishop Dmitrii, who described the construction work on a new Cathedral of St. Sophia in the city of Vitebsk, modeled on the ancient Cathedral of St. Sophia in Polotsk. His Eminence and the Grand Duchess also discussed the restoration work on the Church of the Holy Great Martyr Irina, and plans for the St. Irina Forum "The Spiritual Foundations of the Slavic World."

For additional information, see the following websites:

<http://xn----7sbzarjpe3b6d.xn--p1ai/28-%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8F%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%8F-2016-%D0%B3-%D0%B2-1100-%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%8F%D0%B%D1%81%D1%8F-%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B6%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD/>

<http://www.vitbichi.by/news/religiya/post13038.html>;

<http://www.ehotv.ru/news/social/torzhestvennyj-moleben-v-irininskom-xrame-v-pokrovskom/>

<http://www.ehotv.ru/news/social/fragment-eksklyuzivnogo-intervyu-velikoj-knyagini-marii-vladimirovny-telekompanii-exo-tv/>

<http://www.ehotv.ru/news/social/vladyka-dmitrij-o-znachenii-vizita-gosudaryni/>

<http://www.ehotv.ru/news/social/dar-glavy-doma-romanovyx-irininskomu-xramu/>

Later, the organization "For Faith and Fatherland" hosted a luncheon in honour of the Head of the Russian Imperial House. Attending the luncheon was Archpriest Dmitrii Roshchin, head of the Department for Collaborative Work with Public Associations and Organizations of the Synodal Office for Public Relations and Communications, and the Rector of the Church of St. Nicholas on the Three Hills.

That afternoon, the Head of the Russian Imperial House visited the Russian Academy of Education, where she met the President of the Academy, Liudmila Alekseevna Verbitskaya, and the Vice-President of the Academy, Academician Iurii Petrovich Zinchenko.

During the meeting, the conversation touched on issues relating to the preservation of the rich heritage of Russian education and pedagogy, and of the need for substantive reforms in education that would embrace the traditions from Imperial times and which, to a greater or lesser extent, survived through the years of the Soviet era through the efforts of individual conscientious and responsible teachers, despite the dilatory experiments of the Bolsheviks and the ideological dictates of the totalitarian regime.

The Grand Duchess also recognized the service of the President of the Russian Academy of Education, Liudmila

Verbitskaya, awarding her the Imperial Order of St. Anastasia the Alleviatrix of Captives. Academician Iurii Zinchenko was at that same time awarded the "Imperial Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff."

Also present at the meeting were: Professor Evgenii Viktorovich Tkachenko, PhD (Chemistry), a member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Education (and Minister of Education of the Russian Federation from 1992 to 1996); the Director of the Institute for Education Development Strategy, Professor Svetlana Veniaminovna Ivanova, PhD (Philosophy); the Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander Nikolaevich Zakatov, PhD (History); the advisor to the Chancellery for Interregional and International Relations, Prince Vadim O. Lopukhin, MD; and the Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for the Support and Development of Education, Creativity, and Culture, Elena Valerievna Bayakhchian.

On **September 29**, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, met with members of her Chancellery, then departed by plane for Madrid.

Her Imperial Highness was accompanied to Sheremetev Airport by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kalmykia to the President of the Russian Federation, Aminula Yakubovich Gamzatov, who presented various Kalmyk wares to the Grand Duchess as a farewell gift from his government and people.

***Photographs for this article were supplied by the Distinguished Artist of Kalmykia, Gerel Nurova; Alexander Konstantinovich Demidenko; Vadim Dmitrievich Konev; the Press Agency of the President of the Republic of Kalmykia; and the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House.***